Expansion of Telephone/Mobile facilities in far flung areas

161. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have fixed any target to extend the existing telephone mobile facilities to the rural areas/remote areas and hilly areas in the country for better communication means;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government have formulated any schemes in this respect?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (c) Following targets have been fixed by the Government to extend the existing telephone facilities to the rural areas/remote areas and hilly areas in the country for better communication means:

(i) Provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in 66,822 uncovered villages by November 2007. This excludes villages having population less than 100, lying in thick forest areas/naxalite infested areas etc.

(ii) Replacement of 1,86,872 number of VPTs based on Multi Access Radio Relay (MARR) technology by June, 2006.

(iii) Provision of Rural Community Phones (RCPs) in 46,253 villages having population more than 2000 and having no PCO by September 2007

(iv) Provision of individual rural phone connections (RDELs) on demand in 1,685 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs) with support from USO Fund. This will be done by service providers who have been selected by competitive biddings and with whom USOF has entered into an agreement for provision of the same in their respective allocated areas, as per agreement RDELs are to be provided on demand from January 2006 in these 1,685 SDCAs